**National Health and Fitness Day**

**Fact Sheet**

1. Current [Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines](http://www.csep.ca/english/view.asp?x=949) for the early years (ages 0-4 years) recommend at least 180 minutes of physical activity of *any* intensity per day. Guidelines for children and youth (aged 5-17 years) recommend at least 60 minutes of *moderate- to vigorous-intensity* physical activity per day. Guidelines for adults and older adults (all those over 18 years of age) recommend at least 150 minutes of *moderate- to vigorous-intensity* physical activity per week (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology www.csep.ca/guidelines).
2. Intensity of activity matters! Moderate- to vigorous-intensity activity includes all activities that make you huff and puff. Moderate means you should still be able to have a conversation but are starting to work up a sweat; vigorous intensity means you’re out of breath and can’t maintain a constant conversation.
3. Data from across Canada shows that only 15% of adults, and 7% of children and youth are meeting current physical activity guidelines. The good news is that 84% of 3-4 year old children are meeting the guidelines (Canadian Health Measures Survey).
4. Meeting physical activity guidelines is associated with numerous health benefits, but activity tends to decrease with age, and boys tend to be more active than girls. Further, activity habits tend to track across the lifespan so it’s important to develop healthy physical activity habits at a young age.
5. For young children (aged 0-4 years), those who meet activity guidelines are less likely to be overweight, have better motor skill and cognitive development, have better bone and muscle strength, and have better measures of heart health (Timmons et al. 2012).
6. For children and youth (aged 5-17 years), those who meet activity guidelines are less likely to be overweight, have better bone health, and better scores for mental health. These benefits are especially true for kids who participate in higher intensity activities (Janssen and LeBlanc 2010).
7. For adults (aged 18-64 years), meeting activity guidelines is associated with significant reductions in the risk of all-cause mortality, cardiovascular disease, stroke, high blood pressure, colon and breast cancer, and type 2 diabetes (Warburton et al. 2010).
8. For older adults (those over aged 64 years), meeting activity guidelines means they are less likely to develop numerous types of chronic disease like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, depression, certain cancers, dementia, disability, and loss of function (Paterson et al. 2010).
9. Sedentary behaviour includes all activities that require very little energy expenditure and occur when a person is sitting or lying down. Sedentary behaviour should be thought of as a distinct behaviour from physical activity and increased sedentary behaviour is associated with numerous health risks (Sedentary Behaviour Research Network).
10. Currently, Canada has sedentary behaviour guidelines for the early years, children, and youth. Sedentary behaviour guidelines for adults don’t yet exist.
11. Sedentary behaviour guidelines recommend that young children, children, and youth minimize the time they spend sedentary each day. They also recommend no screen time for those under 2 years of age; no more than 1 hour of screen time per day for those aged 2-4 years old; and no more than 2 hours of screen time for those aged 5-17 years of age (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology)
12. Children who are less sedentary are more likely to be normal weight, healthier, fitter, do better in school, have higher self-esteem, and better social skills than children who are more sedentary (LeBlanc et al., 2012; Tremblay et al., 2011).
13. Currently, adults are spending about 9.5 hours a day being sedentary, and children and youth are spending about 8.5 hours a day being sedentary (Canadian Health Measures Survey). A large part of this sedentary time is accumulated during the work/school day, but children and youth are still engaging in about 2.5 hours of screen time during their free time before and after school.
14. Right now, Canadians (both children and adults) are less fit than their 1981 counterparts and engage in more sedentary behaviour than ever before (Canadian Health Measures Survey). If we were to decrease the amount of inactive Canadians by even 10%, we’d see a 30% reduction in all-cause mortality and a savings of millions of health care dollars (Conference Board of Canada).

***Let’s work together to make Canada the Fittest Nation on Earth!***